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but as a writer he is daringly original in essaying art and at the same time not recognizing intelligibility as a fundamental requisite of art. How can one feel much about something he cannot easily understand?

Since SHAKESPEARE and TENNYSON have found our mother-tongue ample and flexible enough to set forth the farthest reaches of thought with the best effects, is there a more charitable excuse for BROWNING than that he lacked the artist's skill?

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### THE TEXT OF THE 'DIVINE COMEDY.'

*Contributions to the Textual Criticism of the Divina Commedia*, by the Rev. EDWARD MOORE, University Press, Cambridge. 1889. 8vo, pp. lvi, 723.

This handsomely printed book is the most important contribution to the establishment of the text of the 'Divina Commedia' since WITTE's famous Prolegomena to his edition of 1862. Dr. MOORE is the holder of the Barlow lectureship on DANTE in the University of London, and is known to all Dante students by his admirable little book on 'Time References in the Divina Commedia,' and by his occasional letters on kindred subjects in the *Academy*. It has therefore been no surprise to those familiar with him through these sources, to meet with the same qualities in this volume as were conspicuous in what he had previously published: patience, thoroughness, fine scholarship, wide reading, sound judgment, sagacity, fairness, and, what is inevitable in any serious student of Dante, a profound admiration and love for the poet.

The Prolegomena which serve as an introduction to the collated text of the "Inferno," and the discussion of the text of selected passages, constituting the bulk and the most important part of the work, state the problem to be solved in the constitution of the text more clearly than anything I know in English. The same principles must guide, in the main, as have resulted in the generally satisfactory texts of the great Greek and Latin authors, but new applications must continually be

made. The difficulties in classifying the manuscripts of the 'Commedia' are enormous. The number is more than 500—unhappily so, as Dr. MOORE remarks feelingly. It is evident that a complete collation of all these manuscripts is a practical impossibility; setting aside merely orthographical variants, which of themselves would often help to establish relationships of manuscripts, it would need a small army of workers to complete such a gigantic undertaking—even larger than that which assists Dr. Murray in his great Dictionary, considering the number of persons interested and competent to assist. It is to be inferred from what Dr. MOORE tells us that he has spent years in collecting his material, and yet it is a complete collation for only seventeen manuscripts of one *Cantica*. WITTE spent over forty years, as he tells us, in Dante studies, largely in this labor on the text, yet he publishes a complete collation of only four manuscripts, finding it impossible, he says, to make a perfect collation even of the twenty-six which he had selected on general grounds as the most authoritative. As a preliminary to this, he had collated 407 manuscripts for one canto of the "Inferno." It requires no experience in such matters to see what courage and perseverance are necessary to conceive and carry through such a project. Yet indispensable as is an acquaintance with WITTE's methods and results to every editor of DANTE, what he has done is only a fragment of what would be necessary if a complete collation of all manuscripts were to be attempted.

But even if it were done, as is possible with sufficient time and labor, there would remain difficulties enough to appal the stoutest hearts. Whoever will take the trouble to look at pages 51 and 52 of WITTE's Prolegomena will see how much space is necessary to print the variants of only ten lines in only nineteen manuscripts. He estimates that with all possible economy of space, the results of a complete collation would require something like forty bulky quarto volumes, if they were printed. Dr. MOORE has certainly improved upon WITTE's method of printing, so far as economy of space is concerned, but that affects only the financial, material side of the

question. WITTE's inquiry still remains pertinent: Who could master this overwhelming mass of material, even if we suppose that some publishing house could be found self-sacrificing enough to print it?

It is not to be supposed, however, that Dante students will let matters stay where they are, and Dr. MOORE's present volume is an excellent example of the work that must be done, in order to produce finally a text of the greatest poem of the father of modern poetry such as we may reasonably suppose would be acceptable to DANTE himself. It is obvious that the work of collation must be done piecemeal, and when all have been collated with the care shown by WITTE, MUSSAFIA, and Dr. MOORE, and accompanied by such vigorous discussions as are to be found in the present work, with provisional classifications, a scholar of the future will be able to avail himself of such results as have stood the test of further discussion, and set to work on the constitution of a text which may be worthy to rank with those established by the LACHMANNs and the ORELLIS.

The first 250 pages after the Prolegomena are occupied with a complete collation throughout the "Inferno" of all the manuscripts at Oxford and Cambridge, seventeen in number. WITTE's text is taken as the standard, and the variants are printed at the bottom of the page. These manuscripts differ very much in value, as was to be expected; of one of them, noted by Dr. MOORE as L, he says that it is so blundering and careless that he would have abandoned its collation but for the sake of completeness, while others (as, e. g., B, H, and O) are excellent manuscripts. Merely orthographical variants are not noted, but this is partially compensated for by the minute description of the manuscripts themselves, which occupies the latter part of the book; here the characteristic peculiarities in the orthography, as well as in dialect etc., are given. Dr. MOORE has indicated in a prefatory note the difficulties in determining always satisfactorily what can be regarded as a merely orthographical difference, and the advantage which may be drawn from such difference when once shown to be such. It is of course not to be expected that the de-

cision reached would in all cases coincide with that of the student, but at all events the explanations are so clear that the doubter would know just where to go to work to arrive at a conclusion of his own.

The 250 pages following the treatment of the "Inferno" are taken up with the collation and discussion of selected passages. The number of manuscripts collated varies with the different passages, sometimes reaching nearly 250; the larger part of these have been examined personally by Dr. MOORE as far as these passages are concerned, and form a body of critical matter of the highest value. The principles which guided him in the selection, and the method of arriving at a decision, are explained in the Prolegomena.

If a complete collation of all manuscripts is impracticable, it would seem that the results aimed at in such a collation might be approximately attained by selecting passages which for some reason are particularly subject to variations, and collating as large a number for these passages as possible. Hints of relationships might thus be established which would guide other workers in their investigations. This was the method followed by WITTE, which, though founded on only one canto, resulted in establishing what he called the Sienese family. Dr. MOORE has established the existence of another, which he calls the Vatican family, after the so-called Vatican manuscript, WITTE's B. A friend of Dr. MOORE thinks he has discovered another, which he calls the Venetian family; this Dr. MOORE does not consider well established.

There is obviously a great amount of preliminary labor needed in order to make a selection of the proper test passages; some were not recognized as suitable passages until it was too late to make complete collations for them. Also two passages at least, Inf. ii, 60, and Inf. xxxiv, 99, were introduced and discussed, which Dr. MOORE says can in no sense be called test passages. The discussions are ingenious and interesting, and a decision is sought for on well recognized critical principles. Thus, e. g., the reading adopted must be the one which most naturally accounts for the genesis of the others. This principle gives us one of the strongest arguments

(though of course others are not wanting) for *lune* rather than *lume* in Inf. xxxiii, 26. So too the maxim *difficilior lectio potior*, a special case of the principle just mentioned, favors the substitution of *su* for *giù* in Inf. xxxii, 47; of *fesse* for *fosse*, Inf. xx, 69.

The principle formulated by GIULIANI, 'Dante spiegato con Dante,' is often a guide to a decision. Few authors are so consistent throughout as Dante; Dr. MOORE applies to his works, not only in themselves but in their connection with each other, TENNYSON'S beautiful phrase, that through them "an unceasing purpose runs." The author of 'Time References' might be expected to make good use of every opportunity to explain Dante by Dante. The discussions on Purg. xxii, 5, 6, and xxvii, 111, are good examples of the application of this principle. It is interesting to see how, in the latter passage, Dr. MOORE'S wide examination of manuscripts justifies a reading which SCARTAZZINI'S judgment approved of, but which he felt compelled to abandon in deference to the supposed weight of manuscript authority. Lastly, help in coming to a decision can sometimes be got from knowing the authority for the statement made, or the passage imitated from an ancient author. A special appendix is devoted to this latter consideration. The importance of the subject cannot escape the most careless student of DANTE, and it is a great service to bring together in small compass what has been found; some of the information there given is, if I do not mistake, new.

After the discussion of the selected passages is an account of the MSS. examined or collated, with a list of them, as also lists of lines omitted or transposed, and of peculiar readings. Then follow five appendices, discussing DANTE'S references to classical authors, the Vatican family of MSS. and other groups, the interpolated lines in Inf. xxxiii (found in three different manuscripts), the text of Witte's Berlin edition, and finally one by Mr. Tozer on the metre of the 'Divina Commedia.'

Mr. Tozer is evidently a student and lover of Dante and may have every virtue under heaven, but if this appendix is to be taken as

a specimen of his powers, he had better turn them to some other branch of Dante studies. In spite of his feeble disclaimer, he is too much in bondage still to iambs and trochees, which have long since been relegated to the lumber room as far as modern metres are concerned. A man who can suppose that the stately and melodious line,

Per me si va nell'eterno dolore,

can have anything whatsoever in common with Drummond's

White sense's light mind's perspective kept blind

—however "perspective" is accented—is beyond remonstrating with; he is hopeless.

It is in the nature of the case impossible that a book like this can offer many novelties; the central idea of the book itself is derived, as the author says, from WITTE. There are some results, however, which may fairly be claimed as valuable and original. Such is the establishment of the Vatican family of MSS., the importance of which in all future discussions on this subject cannot be overlooked. Dr. MOORE is also, I think, the first to call attention to the fact that different parts of the same manuscript are often apparently founded on different recensions, a fact which future editors of DANTE cannot neglect. He is also the first to call attention to the discrepancies between the texts of the old commentators and their comments, which makes it impossible to cite their authority for a reading from the text alone.\*

But, after all, the mass of what is here found is only material for future use. Dr. MOORE would be the last to assume that he had said the final word on the test passages discussed; certainly in some cases his conclusions do not seem to me justified by the facts. The chief consolation which the author of a book like this can draw from it, is that which the author applies with perfect justice to himself, in citing the solemn and beautiful words of DANTE: he is certainly one

*Che porta il lume dietro, e sè non giova,  
Ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte.*

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\*See however WITTE'S Proleg, p. lviii.